



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, NEIGHBORHOODS, AND STRATEGIC PLANNING DEPARTMENT

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: April 20, 2007

TO: Ray Giometti, Planning Commission Chair
Members of the Planning Commission

FROM: Rebecca Lind, Long Range Planning Manager

SUBJECT: **General Briefing on Benson Hill Communities
Application 2007-M-6**

Issue Statement

- Is the City of Renton's current vision for predominately single-family land use in the Benson Hill Communities still appropriate, given land development patterns under County zoning?
- Should the City of Renton amend its Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map and adopt zoning designations consistent with the existing King County Comprehensive Plan and zoning for the Benson Hill Communities?
- Should the City change the current zoning within the area to implement the adopted Renton Comprehensive Plan resulting in down zonings in some areas upon annexation?

Background

On December 7, 2006, the City received a 10% Notice of Intent to Commence Annexation Proceedings petition from annexation proponents in the Benson Hill Communities. The [Benson Hill, Cascade, and Springbrook](#) area includes 4.2 square-miles and is home to 16,100 residents. King County Elections and Records certified the 10% Notice of Intent petition and the Renton City Council adopted a resolution on March 12, 2007, calling for an election to be set on November 6, 2007.

The Benson Hill Communities proposed annexation includes approximately 2,438-acres of the Benson Hill Area (*Attachment 1, Benson Hill PAA Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designations Map*).

This large area is largely residential, with commercial land use in two areas: Petrovitsky/Carr Rd and 109th Ave SE and 116th Ave SE between SE 168th and SE 172nd Streets.

State law gives annexing cities using the election method the authority to place the issue of zoning on the ballot. However, in the Benson Hill Communities, there are multiple zones and complex zoning issues that make it impractical for the adoption of zoning for this large area to be determined in the ballot box. State law also provides for prezoning prior to annexation. The Renton City Council determined to use the prezoning process for the Benson Hill Communities area, and has referred the issue of prezoning and possible Comprehensive Plan Amendments to the Planning Commission for consideration as part of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan Amendment process.

Review and Evaluation of Renton and King County Zoning

Today, the Renton Comprehensive Plan and the King County Comprehensive Plan and Zoning enact different densities, uses, and standards for many properties in this area. *(See Attachment 1 for Renton Comprehensive Plan and Attachment 4 for King County zoning).* The task before the Planning Commission is to review and discuss the adopted Renton Comprehensive Plan and decide whether changes should be made to accommodate 1) development patterns already in place as a result of County zoning and 2) changes in the County vision or Renton vision for the area. Differences between the County zoning and Renton potential zoning will need to be resolved by either amending the Renton Comprehensive Plan to match the County zoning, or changing the zoning of properties upon annexation.

Summary of Renton Land Use Policy

The Renton Comprehensive Plan Land Use Plan is based on a set of assumptions and visions about future growth and development in the city and the potential annexation areas (Policy LU-3). The Plan concentrates future growth in the emerging Urban Center which includes both the traditional Downtown Core and the Urban Center-North (former industrial area and site of the Landing Mixed Use Development). See Objective NN and Policies LU-211 through LU-215 in Attachment 3.

- 1) Commercial and Multi-family areas surrounding the smaller commercial nodes outside the downtown such as the Highlands, NE 4th Corridor and Sunset Blvd.
- 2) Infill development in single-family residential areas (Policy LU-9).

The Plan also maintains a high ratio of two jobs to one housing unit. (Policy LU-16)

The amount of new stand-alone multi-family growth in the City is restricted outside the Urban Center, and multi-family zoning can only be expanded in areas with multi-family infill sites. Growth is anticipated to occur in areas served by transit and other services that are easier to fund and locate in the Urban Center or around commercial areas. Within the Potential Annexation Areas (PAA), the majority of land use is designated as Residential Single Family (RS) with R-8 zoning, eight dwelling units per net acre. The Plan has an overall goal of a balance between multi-family and single-family (Policy LU-17). It is anticipated that the supply of housing in the PAA would remain single-family to balance the increasingly multi-family development in the Urban Center and around the Highlands, Sunset, NE 4th corridor and Petrovitsky commercial areas.

Renton's growth targets within the existing City in 2003 (last update) were 4,523 units to be provided by 2022. The City's land capacity for residential was 9,653 units in 2003. This figure does not include the additional capacity recently added at the Urban Center-North. Renton's current policy is to maintain a land supply 20% above target (Policy LU-8).

The King County target for 2001 to 2022 is 1,739 units and capacity is 5,622 units for the entire Benson/Fairwood PAA, plus the East Renton Plateau. Upon annexation, Renton would absorb a share of the King County target based on the proportional acreage in the annexation area (Policy LU-5). The specific Benson Hill share of this target is not yet calculated. As Renton considers rezoning for this area, it will be necessary to insure that adequate capacity continues to exist through the entire resultant city to meet the modified growth targets. The excess capacity above targets in the Renton land use system gives the City the ability to make choices about where density will occur as zoning is considered.

The City's approach to land use in the PAA is a result of the emphasis on growth in the Urban Center, maintenance of a balance of single-family and multi-family unit types through the City, restrictions on multi-family zoning in outlying areas, and the desire to locate growth where urban services are more easily maintained. As a result, Renton Comprehensive Plan designations and potential zoning under that land use scheme provides for more single-family housing at lower density than the current zoning within King County. Renton is able to plan for primarily single-family growth because it has an Urban Center that is actively being redeveloped with higher density housing.

The Benson Hill Communities area is designated with multiple land use districts in the adopted Renton Comprehensive Plan. The designations include the following approximate acreages:

- 108 acres as Residential Low Density (RLD) implemented through three potential zoning districts allowing single family detached dwellings:
 - R-4 (four dwelling units per net acre),
 - R-1 (one dwelling units per net acre),
 - Resource Conservation (resource, agriculture and one dwelling unit per ten acres)
- 1,906 acres as Residential Single Family (RS) implemented through one zoning district allowing only single family detached dwellings:
 - R-8 (eight dwelling units per net acre).
- 200 acres as Residential Medium Density (RMD) implemented through two potential zoning districts allowing single family, townhouse, or multi-family:
 - R-10 (ten dwelling units per net acre)
 - R-14 (14 dwelling units per net acre with a bonus to 18 dwelling units per net acre)

- 91 acres as Residential Multi-family (RMF) implemented through one zoning district allowing townhouses and multi-family:
 - RMF (20 dwelling units per net acre)
- 71 acres as Commercial Corridor (CC) implemented through one zoning district allowing commercial development and mixed use multi-family
 - CA (20 dwelling units per net acre)

A summary of each of the Renton land use designations and the zoning that implements them is included in *Attachment 2, Land Use Designation Descriptions and Attachment 3, Relevant Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element Policies which include Regional Growth Policies and Urban Center Policies.*

King County Land Use Policy

In the King County Comprehensive Plan, the majority of the area is designated Urban Residential (4-12 dwelling units). The implementing zoning is primarily R-6 and R-8. The area also includes areas of R-12 zoning. The County also has large areas mapped as R-18 and Community Business. This zoning strategy results in a significant amount of medium density single-family and multi-family housing capacity. The Community Business designation is comparable to Renton's Corridor Commercial designation although it generally allows greater multi-family density. *See Attachment 4*

Differences Between City and County Land Use Policy

There are several significant differences between County zoning and the zoning that would result if the Renton Comprehensive Plan land use were implemented.

First, the King County Comprehensive Plan and zoning maps more acreage in higher density use designations that occur in the Renton land use strategy. For example, Renton R-8 vs. King County R-12. The King County system assigns greater capacity to the area than the Renton system would.

Second, the County zoning regulations allow approximately 20 percent more capacity in zones where the mapped zone category name is the same as the Renton zoning: e.g. R-4 in Renton vs. R-4 in King County. This difference occurs across the board because Renton uses a net development density system, while King County uses a gross density system. County zoning allows the development density to be clustered on one portion of a site and density credit is given for environmentally constrained areas retained in open space. This development pattern does not occur in the Renton zoning system because Renton standards do not allow transfer of development rights from critical areas to other parts of a site. The County's zoning allows bonuses up to 20 percent per gross acre while Renton's zoning system has no density bonuses.

In addition, County zoning allows multi-family use in all zones R-4 and above. As a consequence of the density transfer and multi-family allowance, it is possible for a higher density cluster of multi-family use to be built in County zones that appear with lower

density designations on a zoning map. Renton zoning does not allow multi-family units on parcels zoned for less than ten dwelling units per net acre.

Attachment 5 is a matrix summary of Renton zoning standards compared with King County zoning. This matrix illustrates the difference between County and City density and other development standards for zones that have similar names but will yield different capacities and types of development upon execution. The chart illustrates how County zoning might be translated into an equivalent City zoning.

Attachment 6 is a map that illustrates both the current adopted Renton land use policy and the adopted King county zoning. The color on the map represents Renton land use policy; while the zone names printed on the map (e.g. "R-6") represent the County zoning.

- The Renton Commercial Corridor designation, in red, is roughly equivalent to the County Community Business designation. However, the County R-48 designation allows greater density than the Renton Commercial Corridor would allow for mixed-use development.
- The Renton Residential Medium Density designation is represented in tan. It is generally consistent with County R-12 and R-18 zoning without bonuses.
- The greatest discrepancy occurs where Renton has mapped areas Residential Single Family that has a maximum density of R-8, net. Many of these areas have County zoning of R-8, which would imply a density under the Renton system closer to R-10.

Attachment 7 shows the changes that would be required in the Renton Comprehensive Plan to translate the zoning in the King County system into the Renton density and use equivalents. A comparison of Attachment 6 and 7 will provide a quick summary of the essential discrepancies between Renton and County land use strategies in this area.

At the Planning Commission meeting on April 25, 2007, staff will present a discussion of the differences between the King County land use vision and the Renton land use vision for this area based on the overall adopted policies and zoning designations presented on this map.